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Klemeshev, Andrey; Fedorov, Gennady M.

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RESEARCH

Andrey Klemeshev
Gennady Fedorov

**BALTIC STUDIES
AT THE I. KANT
STATE UNIVERSITY
OF RUSSIA**



The Immanuel Kant State University of Russia (until 2005, Kaliningrad State University) addressed the issues of the Baltic Sea region in mid-1990s. Initially, the research was done into the relations of the Kaliningrad region and its neighbouring countries. A number of research projects were implemented in the framework of a thematic research plan of the Ministry of Education of Russia and were financed by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation and its research funds.

Several studies into the Baltic region have been commissioned by the Government of the Kaliningrad region, as it was then that the main provisions of the development strategy of the region were being elaborated and new international links with the neighbouring countries were being formed. The experience of these countries (particularly those with their economies in transition — Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) is very useful for the Kaliningrad region. Some of the studies dealt with the functioning of the economy of the Russian exclave, being surrounded by independent states, others focused on the ways of ensuring a smooth transit of people and cargoes between Kaliningrad and other Russian regions, as well as the development of cross-border cooperation [9; 11; 32; 34; 36].

These research works showed a way of using the experience of the neighbouring countries with economies in transition for implementing economic reforms in the Kaliningrad region. These works also revealed the specifics of the Kaliningrad region as an exclave of Russia and indicated the need to maintain and perfect the mechanism of special economic zones, which obviously cannot be replaced by an increased financial support of the state to its exclave region.

The project PROMETHEE II “The global plan of the development of the Kaliningrad region”, implemented in 1997—1998 in the framework of the TACIS programme made an important contribution to the elaboration of the regional development strategy. This project was carried out jointly with the University of Pierre Mendes (Grenoble, France) and the Institute of Econ-

omy in Transition (Moscow, Russia), involving experts from other research centres of Moscow and Saint-Petersburg, as well as scholars from France, Britain, Germany and Finland [3; 12; 16].

The project identified general and specific factors that determined the character of the economic crisis in the Russian exclave region (as Professor I. Samson (France) put it “the fragility of the economy of the region”). The project showed the opportunities that the region had in the new system of the territorial division of labour and drew prospects of cross-border cooperation.

In the 1990s, following the above mentioned research projects, the strategy of the development of the Kaliningrad region as a “region of cooperation between Russia and other countries” took its shape. Special emphasis was given to enhancing cooperation with the neighbouring countries of the Baltic Sea region [15; 33; 38].

At the very beginning of the XXI century, much attention was paid to the problem of exclavity of the Kaliningrad region and the development of the region given the EU enlargement and NATO’s advance to the east, while focusing on the progress of all forms of cooperation with the neighbouring counties and maintaining the status of the region as a part of the single economic space of Russia [10; 17—25; 39].

In 2002, the European Documentation Centre (EDC) was set up in IK-SUR in accordance with the corresponding agreement between the European Commission and the I. Kant State University of Russia. The Centre performed a coordinating function for a number of research units of the university. On October 2nd, 2008 the European Documentation Centre was renamed the European Union Information Centre. The renaming was done following the agreement between the I. Kant State University of Russia and the European Commission, which was signed in Russia on February 5, 2007. The major function of the Centre is to disseminate information on current developments in the EU — Russia relations (including the EU — Russia negotiations on the Kaliningrad region). The Centre prepared a series of special thematic issues of the bulletin “European Union — Russia — Kaliningrad” [4], which highlight some general questions pertaining to the EU — Russia relations. Thus, the last, fifth issue of the bulletin [4] introduces the reader to the EU transport policy and the relationship between the EU and Russia in transport. The authors of the articles give a detailed analysis of transport problems on the new border of Russia and EU member states — Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. Transport problems of the Kaliningrad region are given a thorough consideration in the context of the development of the transport sector of the EU.

During the implementation of another international project “RESAREA: Establishment of a bipolar area of science and research Kaliningrad-Klaipeda” a centre for cross-border research was established. The centre is affiliated with the Institute of Cross-border Research. Its main objective is to organize joint research activities of young scientists specialising in the development of cross-border regions.

Another programme “The Baltic University” — Regional University Network, brings together more than 180 universities in 14 countries of the

Baltic Sea region. Participants of the programme developed and implemented courses for Bachelor, Specialist, Master and Doctoral students. On completion of a course, the Centre of the Programme at the University of Uppsala (Sweden) and one of the universities of the region award a certificate which includes a list of attended courses and their ECTS equivalents. The programme generally focuses on environmental protection and sustainable development of the Baltic Sea region. This programme is coordinated by the Programme Secretariat located at the University of Uppsala (Sweden). One of the regional centres of the programme was established in the I. Kant State University of Russia in 1997. The main objective of this regional centre is to coordinate activities of the Programme in the Kaliningrad region. The programme actively cooperates with Kaliningrad Technical University, the Baltic Fishing Fleet Academy, AgroBusiness Academy, a branch of Saint-Petersburg State Agrarian University (in Polesk). Numerous consultations and workshops for municipal and regional authorities have been organised in the framework of the programme. Besides, “The Baltic University” programme carries out joint research, taking the lead and being a partner in numerous international projects. During 2003—2005, the project “Forum of the Baltic Cities — Sustainable development of urban areas” was implemented. The aim of the project was to establish a network of cities and universities in order to develop and implement a strategy for monitoring sustainability in the Baltic cities as well as to promote education and science for sustainable development in universities of the Baltic Sea region. The Kaliningrad centre of the programme prepared a publication showing the results of the work [27]. Currently, with the support of the regional authorities, a training course “Healthy Agrosystems” is being elaborated. The Centre runs international seminars inviting representatives of universities and authorities of the Baltic Sea region who are involved in rural development.

The programme “Interregional research in social sciences” plays an important role in the study of the Baltic Sea region. The programme is being jointly implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science, Ino-Center (Information. Science. Education) and the Kennan Institute of the Woodrow Wilson Center in collaboration with the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. During the implementation of the programme in 2001, the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences (BaltMION) was set up at the I. Kant State University of Russia. It is one of 9 MIONs forming a network of similar institutions created in Russian universities. In addition to Kaliningrad, regional institutes of social sciences were established in Veliky Novgorod, Vladivostok, Voronezh, Irkutsk, Yekaterinburg, Rostov-on-Don, Saratov, and Tomsk. Special resource centres were set up in Moscow and Saint-Petersburg to provide support and assistance to all MIONs. MGIMO (Moscow State Institute of International Relations) is directly involved in this work. Scholars representing different fields of science — political scientists, geographers, economists, historians, sociologists, specialists in cultural studies, philology and philosophy — take part in the work of BaltMION. The interdisciplinary approach practiced by BaltMion allows for comprehensive coverage of the problem studied, par-

ticularly the problems of the EU-Russia relations, including enhancing cooperation in the Baltic Sea region.

BaltMION is a member of several network co-operation projects and the organizer of a series of international conferences and seminars. A series “The Region of Cooperation” was launched, publishing the works of both Russian and international authors (by the end of 2008, more than 50 issues had been published). In 2003, with the participation of Kaliningrad and Moscow experts an analytic report “The Kaliningrad region of Russia and the EU enlargement. Problems of European integration” was prepared and published in Russian and English. The report summarized the experience of previously done studies and made suggestions for further development of international cooperation [13].

A series of publications in English has been launched to better inform international experts and specialists from other Russian universities about the research work done by BaltMion in the I. Kant State University of Russia [41; 43—45; 47].

In the middle of the first decade of XXI century, the gained research experience and practical need (the accession of Poland and the Baltic States to NATO and the EU) showed the necessity to expand the geography of research. Increasing attention was paid to the Baltic Sea region as a whole, as the space where the most active cooperation of Russia and the European Union is taking place [14, 26, 29, 30, 2, 31, 37, 35]. The latest developments have led to changes in the themes explored by scientists from the I. Kant State University of Russia. To do research in the new themes, the University scholars obtained grants of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. The University has become more actively involved as a partner (or as a lead partner) in international projects, the INTERREG programme “The Baltic Sea Region” and the “Neighbourhood: Lithuania, Poland, the Kaliningrad region of Russia” programme. IKSUR scientists implement these projects collaborating with scientists and experts from all over the Baltic Sea region. Close contacts have been established with the universities and research centres in Gdansk, Klaipeda, Riga, Berlin, Rostock, Stockholm, Copenhagen, and Turku. In 2007—2008, 8 projects were implemented; the results of some of them have already been published as monographs [1; 28; 40].

In 2008, the I. Kant State University of Russia implemented 7 projects with a total budget of 427 thousand euros in the framework of the Neighbourhood Programme “Lithuania, Poland and the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation” and the “Neighbourhood programme” of the Baltic Sea region. In 2009, the project “Lagoons as the cultural and historical crossroads of peoples in the south-eastern Baltic area” is scheduled to be completed (the “Crossroads”) (2007—2009). The budget of the project amounts to 85 thousand euros. Another project “Partnership between Russian and Polish local authorities as a basis for cross-border co-operation” (2007—2009) boasts the budget of 110 thousand euros. Within the next project period 2007—2013, the Neighbourhood Programme “Poland — Lithuania — the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation” will be implemented in three priority areas:

- contribution to the solution of common problems (environmental sustainability and improving the accessibility within the territory of the programme);
- economic and social development (tourism, business and the labour market development, joint planning and spatial development);
- communication between people and organizations (the improvement of skills in education, supporting local initiatives and contacts between people, development of management systems conforming to the principles of sustainable development and democracy).

At international conferences organized and hosted by the university, the topical issues of economic and cultural cooperation in the Baltic Sea were discussed. In 2006, the Baltic Education Forum was organized for the first time and it has become an annual event since then. Rectors of a number of leading universities of Russia and the Baltic Sea region take part in the work in the forum. In 2008, the international conference “The Baltic Sea region in the contemporary world politics” was organised in the framework of the Forum. The conference particularly noted that the Baltic Sea region should not be considered in the first place just as a subject of international relations, but rather as a platform for their versatile political and economic, social and cultural development. Some of the conference materials are available in this issue of the journal.

The I. Kant University scientists took part in the preparation of a series of collective monographs published by other research centres, and prepared several publications in the leading scientific journals outside Kaliningrad [5—8]. Many materials have been published in monographs and scientific journals abroad [42, 46].

The journal “Vestnik of the I. Kant State University of Russia” highlights topical issues of modern Humanities, Natural and Technical sciences. Reading the journal one can find the results of research works done by Russian and European scientists. Special emphasis is laid to the publications focusing on the Baltic Sea region and the Kaliningrad region. Priority is also given to research into fundamental and applied problems of the Baltic region which is carried out according to the interdisciplinary approach and applying modern research methods.

Launching the “Baltic region” journal in collaboration with Saint-Petersburg State University, the leading education centre on sustainable development of the Baltic Sea region, allows the editors to reach a wide range of professionals interested in the specifics of the development of the Baltic Sea region. Results of the research works carried out both in Russia and abroad in the field of regional geography, economics, sociology, political science, history, ecology and other sciences are discussed on the pages of the “Baltic region”. The journal aims to provide a platform for expert discussion of the problems of the Baltic Sea region, to give coverage of the geopolitical, socio-economic and cultural processes in the Baltic Sea, as well as promote Russian culture and Russian language, enhance cooperation and mutual understanding in the region.

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